



## **Planet IndigenUs**

### **Sophomore festival launches August 14 at Harbourfront Centre**

#### **361+ artists over 10 days**

**TORONTO, July 23** - This **August 14**, **Harbourfront Centre** officially launches the **Planet IndigenUs** festival; a massive **multi-disciplinary 10 day festival** focusing on honouring the role of art in Indigenous life from around the globe. The festival, co-produced with Brantford's **Woodland Cultural Centre** on the Six Nations Reserve, is the second instalment of the internationally-renowned event, which, in its inaugural turn in 2004, saw over 300 artists at Harbourfront Centre and on partner sites across the city of Toronto. This year's festival includes over 361 artists from Canada, Australia, the USA, Norway, Mexico and New Zealand, among others.

**Maestro John Kim Bell** (Kahnawake Mohawk, CAN), an **Officer of the Order of Canada**, invigorates the first weekend, reclaiming his baton for his first public orchestral conducting performance since 1997. (Mr. Bell turned his attention since 1997 to focus on establishing the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation whose initiatives include the televised National Aboriginal Achievement Awards among other key mentorship, empowerment and industry career programmes for youth.) Bell conducts a spectacular and powerful opening performance from **the all-Canadian 72-member Planet IndigenUs Festival Orchestra** (featuring musicians from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and others). Fittingly, the vivacious *Overture of Candide* is part of the evening's programme, a nod to Bell's tenure and instruction from the enigmatic Leonard Bernstein. The concert also delights in the vocal talents of **Sopranos Melody Mercredi** (CAN) and **Mavis Callihoo** (Iroquois/Cree, CAN).

The **inaugural First Words Indigenous: Hip Hop Conference and Showcase** underscores the important contributions Indigenous people have made to the genre. Keynote speaker **Ernie Panicioli** (Cree, USA) opens the proceedings, bringing his stature as North America's pre-eminent photographic documentarian of the hip-hop nation to the forefront. Participants include Samoan Hip Hop artist **King Kapisi** (Samoan, NZ), **7<sup>th</sup> Generation** (CAN) and **Konect-A-Dot** (AUS), among many others.

Country music is showcased through both weekends of the festival beginning with the talents of couple **Tracy Bone** (Keeseekoowenin Ojibwa, CAN) and **J.C. Campbell** (CAN), as well as performances from Juno Award Nominee for Emerging Artist of the Year **Crystal Shawanda** (Ojibwe, CAN) and a rousing performance from award-winning singer **Shane Yellowbird** (Cree, CAN) who is set to drop his sophomore album *It's About Time* this fall.

Youth empowerment within the Indigenous community is represented by **ArtCirq** (Inuit, CAN). The Inuit circus and multi-media group from Igoolik, Nunavut have cultivated an international reputation for their creative performances. Their training programs create opportunities and role models through their art in the far North. The **Right.Here.** youth film project brings together 24 youth (from the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve, the community around the House of Ghesig – Native Child and Family Services in Scarborough, and from the 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Image Makers film programme) to participate in an intensive filmmaking workshop with community mentors with the end result to produce short films which screen at Planet IndigenUs.

**New Zealand** artists are represented in full force within the arc of the festival. **Mihirangi** (Kulcha nation, NZ) performs high-energy r'n b dance music, using her loop pedals, and beatboxing to create a solo band while she sings in both Maori and English. **Pacific Curls** (Maori, NZ) are a trio who create a unique blend of Celtic, Pacific and Maori music. 2008 Pacific Innovation and Excellence award-winning Auckland playwright **Dianna Fuemana** (Amerika Samoa, NZ) draws on her mother's story to present her play *Falemalama* in its **Canadian premiere**.

**Australia's Tjupurru** (Djabera Djabera tribe, AUS) uses the unusual Didgeribone and electronic face bass to create a moaning electronic music. The acclaimed **Polytoxic Dance Company** (AUS) present the **Canadian premiere** of *Teuila Postcards*. A rambunctious stereotype-breaking show using contemporary dance, theatre and irreverent comedy leads the audience through what should be a blissful vacation, but turns into an insightful commentary on an everyday Samoan girl's life.

**Norway's Adjagas** represent the Indigenous people of Northern Europe. Their music, which is traditional of the Sámi people, consists of highly spiritual songs called 'joiks' and has been rightfully described by The Guardian as "Spellbinding."

Highlights of the film programme include a rare screening of *They Call Me Chief*, a film from writer/director Don Marks which follows the story of Fred Saskamoose, Canada's first Professional Native hockey player. (Mr. Saskamoose will also be attending the festival.) Canada's **imagineNATIVE film + media arts festival** selects a racy program for **Failure to Comply: Shorts from the Underground**.

Fashion takes centre stage on The Natrel Pond during the **Fire and Fashion Live 2009** featuring designs from Canadians **Angela DeMontigny** (Cree/Metis, CAN), **Danita Strawberry** of Danitaz Designs (Cree /Saulteaux, CAN), **Tracy Toulouse** (Ojibwe, CAN) of Swirling Wind Designs and emerging designer **Chessa Syrette** (Ojibwe, CAN). This world Indigenous Fashion show also welcomes **guest designers from New Zealand** including Wellington's **Wiremu Barriball** (Maori, NZ) as well as **Kiri Nathan** (Maori, NZ). Expect leather and suede collections, designs inspired by traditional maori cloaks and skirts and collections using new technologies inspired by traditional **Tā moko** (Maori tattooing).

### **About World Routes**

A series of FREE festivals that run from July through September, World Routes presented by RBC explores ideas in contemporary culture, bringing together rich, artistic traditions from around the globe. For information visit [harbourfrontcentre.com](http://harbourfrontcentre.com) or call 416-973-4000. Harbourfront Centre is located at 235 Queens Quay West, in Toronto.

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*Full listings releases of all weekend activities will be released on Monday, July 27 and Tuesday, July 28.  
Partner activities around the City of Toronto will be released on Wednesday, July 28.*

For High-resolution images: <http://media.harbourfrontcentre.com/>

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